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SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

DEPARTMENT FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06-09-13

TAGS: [CE](#) [MV](#) [AGMT](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 87 (06-09-03)

Classified by CDA Lewis Amselem, Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

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(C) Sri Lanka is relatively quiet today (June 9), with precious little reaction just yet to the goings on at the Tokyo donors conference. We expect that reaction will begin to flow in soon, as the speeches given and pledges made at Tokyo net wider press play here. (Note: Re local press reaction to events thus far, please see our media reaction cables.) In the meantime, we just wanted to flag the following peace process-related issues:

-- Chief Tiger Negotiator Anton Balasingham was quoted on the pro-LTTE website "TamilNet" on June 6 as saying that discussions re an interim structure in the north/east could only proceed on the basis of "specific and concrete" proposals from the GSL because "mere intent" was not enough. Balasingham's comments were clearly foreshadowing Prime Minister Wickremesinghe's June 9 remarks at Tokyo in which he promised to discuss forming an interim structure with "significant" Tiger control. (Note: FYI. The Ops Center called about all the wire service stories highlighting the PM's June 9 comments re an interim structure as some sort of dramatic development that would change the situation here ipso facto. We provided the Ops Center the context, stressing that the PM was indeed reaching out to the Tigers. We noted, however, that the key point was how the Tigers reacted to the offer from this point forward and that based on Balasingham's June 6 comments it was not clear whether a positive response from the group was in the offing soon. Our comments to the Ops Center were cc'ed to SA/INS.)

-- According to press reports, a Buddhist religious ceremony held in Tokyo June 8 in honor of the PM's visit was marred by three young Sri Lankans creating a commotion. (Note: It was not precisely clear whether the PM was in attendance when this incident occurred.) The three suspects, described as "staying illegally" in Japan, had alleged links to the radical Janantha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). The youths reportedly criticized the peace process loudly and accused the temple leader of taking one million rupees (approximately USD 10,000) from the GSL. The three men then reportedly tried to assault some monks present at the ceremony. The three are reported to be currently enjoying the hospitality of a Japanese jail, which probably does not involve a lot of sushi and sake.

-- Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is reportedly to receive TIME Magazine's "Asian Hero" award on June 11 at a ceremony in Japan. In a press statement, TIME said the PM was selected for "standing up to his President" in regard to the peace process with the Tamil Tigers. TIME went on to state that its "Asian Heroes" exemplified "extraordinary courage, charisma and genius" that enabled winners to make a "big difference" in their societies or fields. (Note: By the way, in addition to Wickremesinghe, we understand that over 10 other well-known Asians are receiving a similar award from TIME this year.)

-- And, in the back-at-home department, two people were killed over the weekend in the eastern part of the country. In the first incident, which took place in Batticaloa on June 6, a former member of the anti-LTTE EPDP party and his 15-month old daughter were killed when a grenade exploded. In a second incident, unidentified gunmen shot and killed an EPDP member on June 7 in Trincomalee. As with many such killings in past weeks (see Colombo 735, for example), the Tigers seem to be the culprits, though no one was caught and the group has not taken credit. (POL)

AMSELEM